

Friends Forward



Summer 2009

National Wildlife Refuge System

JOHN & KAREN HOLLINGSWORTH



Accelerating climate change is making itself evident in a number of ways, including reduced sea ice in the Arctic and longer summer droughts elsewhere.

Climate Change Challenge

Climate change is already having visible impacts in the United States—reduced sea ice in the Arctic, longer summer droughts, reduced availability of water, earlier spring that pushes certain plants and animals further north, changes in salinity and distribution of algae and fish in oceans, lakes and streams.

Global climate change may be the greatest conservation challenge of the 21st century, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is determined

to rise to the challenge through conservation planning at a landscape or regional level, reducing its carbon footprint, engaging employees, Friends and citizens, and emphasizing partnerships and cooperation.

The Service has two full-time senior professionals dedicated to lead climate change activities and a National Climate Team, which includes members from all the Service divisions and regions.

From the Chief Together, We Can Change



Accelerating climate change requires a whole new way of thinking about what we as individuals can do for the

environment. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Refuge System will play important roles. But no government or nonprofit organization can have an impact without both public support and individual action. That's where you come in.

As the Service works to restore and protect healthy habitats, Refuge Friends can be engaged—starting with cutting their own carbon footprints. The Refuge System—along with the Service—is committed to becoming carbon neutral by 2020. Here are a few easy steps we each take to reach the same goal—maybe even before 2020:

- Replace and recycle inefficient incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs, which use two-thirds less energy and generate less heat. If every household in America replaced three bulbs, that would keep a trillion pounds of carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere.

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Sleepover on a Refuge

More than 170 national wildlife refuges and fish hatcheries across the country offer free RV hookups or the use of simple cabins or bunkhouses in return for volunteer labor. Friends can assist in hosting resident volunteers on their own refuges or pay a working visit to other refuges around the country. You can search a new online list of all the resident volunteer opportunities in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at www.fws.gov/volunteers.

Resident volunteers either provide their own “homes” (some type of recreational vehicle) or stay in refuge or hatchery housing if available. The refuge or hatchery typically provides such amenities as an RV pad with septic, water and electricity hook-ups. In some cases, there will be a “common area” with laundry facilities, Internet access, phones and more. Government housing may consist of shared spaces such as houses, bunkhouses, cabins, mobile homes, trailers, and even field camps at some Alaska refuges.

Each location will have its own set of opportunities and requirements. Most — but not all — sites require a minimum of 40 hours per week for a couple, and 32 hours a week for a single person living on an RV pad. Volunteers may help in the visitor center or assist with environmental education programs, outdoor field monitoring or invasive species control; they may photograph natural and cultural resources, lead tours or help with special projects like banding ducks.

The Friends of Lake Woodruff National Wildlife Refuge in Florida worked with the refuge manager to pave the way — literally — for resident volunteers when the refuge lost much of its full-time staff. The Friends put down three concrete RV



Resident volunteer Jim Bedford redesigned and rebuilt the visitor center bookstore at Lake Woodruff National Wildlife Refuge in Florida.


pads, digging the ditches, pulling the cable for electricity and staining picnic tables. The Friends raised \$8,000 for the project with additional donations from other local nonprofit groups.

Friends volunteer coordinator Beth Cushing says the group was inundated with calls after notices were placed with Workampers (a print and online resource www.workamper.com). Acting refuge manager Boyd Blihovde interviewed and “hired” the resident volunteers. Four couples spent three months on the refuge during the winter. One volunteer remodeled the gift shop and others operated heavy equipment.

Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge in Georgia hosts 15–20 resident volunteers during the winter. The volunteers stay in their own motor homes or in one of the six FEMA

trailers at the refuge. Okefenokee Refuge recently completed an environmental education classroom in which one glass case is being dedicated to exhibiting the crafts and artistic skills of volunteers. The display includes beaded jewelry, drawings, photography, ribbon necklaces, wood working, gourd decorating, pine needle basketry and quilting. “We are delighted to showcase their skills to our many visitors,” says Sally Webb, a member of the Okefenokee Wildlife League board, “and we are ever hopeful of enticing new volunteers to our team.”

Tips to Building RV Pads

- Find a fairly secluded area — close to the office but not the highway.
- Concrete pads are preferred.
- Always provide electricity — and figure that the underground electrical line may be the biggest single expense. 

Fascination with Lighthouses

We are eternally fascinated by lighthouses. While they inspire stories of daring rescue and occupy a significant niche in the travel industry, they also frequently need repair. Major fundraising campaigns have been launched to restore lighthouses on national wildlife refuges on opposite sides of the country—Kilauea Point Lighthouse in Hawaii (Kilauea Point National Wildlife Refuge) and Assateague Lighthouse in Virginia (Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge).

The refuge Friends organizations are taking the lead as \$1.5 million is needed for the Assateague Lighthouse and \$2.5 million in Hawaii. Both Friends groups have hired fundraising consultants and will be seeking grants and private donations.

Assateague Lighthouse at Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge in Virginia



MYRNA CHERRIX

The Chincoteague Natural History Association will use proceeds from lighthouse tours and a gift shop for the restoration, and also plans to establish an endowment for future maintenance. The Kilauea Point community is raising money in a “ka lama kuhikuhi no na hanauna (beacon for generations to come)” campaign through the summer.

*Steadfast, serene,
immovable, the same,
Year after year; through
all the silent night
Burns on forevermore
that quenchless flame,
Shines on that
inextinguishable light!*

—Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

The Kilauea Point Lighthouse has guarded Hawaii’s northernmost coastline for almost 100 years. “As the most intact light station remaining within the Hawaiian Islands,” says Barry Stieglitz, project leader for the Hawaiian and Pacific Islands refuges, “the historical significance of Kilauea Point is recognized on local, statewide and national levels. With 500,000 visitors a year, it is among Hawaii’s most popular tourist attractions.”


Linda Paik Moriarty, whose late husband Dan was a manager of the refuge in the 1980s, refers to the lighthouse as a “land star for the people here.” Plans call for the restoration to be complete in time for the 100th anniversary of the Kilauea Point Lighthouse in 2013.



JOHN DEMELLO

Kilauea Point Lighthouse at Kilauea National Wildlife Refuge in Hawaii

Standing proudly on the crest of a 22-foot sand dune in Virginia is Assateague Lighthouse, first lit in 1833, first replaced in 1867. Historic Assateague Village grew and prospered at the base of the lighthouse until the light was automated in 1933. Six years later, the U.S. Lighthouse Service merged with the U.S. Coast Guard.

In 2004, the Coast Guard conveyed Assateague Lighthouse to Chincoteague Refuge. In an agreement with the refuge, the Chincoteague Natural History Association agreed to open the lighthouse for tours and began raising money for restoration. The gallery deck, roof and lantern will all be restored. Chincoteague Natural History Association President Myrna Cherrix says the lighthouse is one of the hooks that brings people to the refuge. “Once here, they find out all the wonderful opportunities available on the refuge.” 



from friend to friend

*share your
success
stories*

A Welcome Cabin

by Catherine Meinhold

Just a year ago, the Friends of Wertheim Welcome Cabin was nothing more than a dream. Today, after much hard work, the Friends has a place where members can interact with refuge visitors and reach out to audiences of all ages.

Friends board member Anne Meinhold felt that we needed a space to hold meetings and programs, store supplies and welcome visitors. "To get more active members," added president Claire Goad, "we needed a space other than someone's living room." Board members Linda Cox and Bob Heins worked together on everything from fundraising and logistics to detailed building design and vendor coordination.

Kaufold's Country Sheds and Gazebos of Ridge, NY, inexpensively custom-built the 10-foot by 35-foot Amish-made structure. French doors separating the office space and the

wide center room from the screened porch were donated by Marvin Windows and Doors. The structure includes a deck and is fully accessible. A local electrician added heating and air conditioning, electricity and insulation.

Our welcome cabin cost approximately \$25,000, with financial support from the Caithness Energy Center, Suffolk County legislator Kate Browning's Community Support Initiative Fund, the Post-Morrow Foundation and Friends. Our postmaster in Brookhaven, NY, is creating a one-day postal stamp with the Friends logo to honor our new cabin.

Tips

- Prepare a full plan for the project and a drawing of the finished structure before seeking grants or approaching potential funders.
- Be prepared to negotiate prices with vendors; be flexible on timing. ✂

Public Witness Day

by Bill Durkin

"A child's world is fresh and new and beautiful, full of wonder and excitement," wrote Rachel Carson, who is honored with a refuge in her name in southern coastal Maine.

With that "wonder and excitement," I was on the path to Capitol Hill and Public Witness Day in April to support the National Wildlife Refuge System before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies.

You only have five minutes to talk and the original date had been pushed back to a time when I was to be on a family vacation in Florida, but my message to Congress was clear: increase the operating budget for the Refuge System, request full funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund and support for Rachel Carson Refuge. Five minutes passed quickly and then I was on a flight back to my family vacation. The time spent was well worth it.

The classic ending to the adventure really hit me when I was driving from the airport, crossing over the Indian River: I caught the sunset over Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge in Florida, the first refuge in the country. ✂

Bill Durkin is president of Friends of Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge, ME. Also testifying on Public Witness Day were John Verdon of the Friends of Pool 9 (IA), Marie Springer of the Friends of Walkill River (NJ), Nicole Whittington-Evans of the Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges, and the National Wildlife Refuge Association.



JOHN PETRAGLIA
Friends of Wertheim National Wildlife Refuge (NY) designed this custom-built Amish-made welcome cabin.

Collaboration on a “Hot” Event

by Leigh Ann Vradenburg

When Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge manager Tom Melanson approached the Friends of the Bosque to assist with a special use filming request, it didn't seem like anything out of the ordinary. But when we realized the request was from the Food Network and it was only two weeks away, it was the start of a memorable event.

The Food Network was looking for a place to film an installment of their Burger Nation series, featuring the famous green chile cheeseburger of The Buckhorn Tavern in our local community of San Antonio. The City of Socorro, the Chamber of Commerce and the refuge saw an innovative way to promote eco-tourism in a non-traditional way—using the spectacular landscape as a setting rather than a destination.



At the Network's request, the Friends worked with the Chamber of Commerce to set up a Chile Festival on filming day with regional chile product vendors and local musicians. More than 100 festival goers poured in mid-morning while crews filmed, the band played and burgers sizzled.

The great surprise was the appearance of Food Network star Bobby Flay, who challenged

Buckhorn Tavern owner Bobby Olguin for the title of Greatest Green Chile Cheeseburger. By 5 p.m., the Network crew was headed back to New York and Olguin had won the blind taste test. Our refuge and our community were in the limelight for a whole new audience. *W*

Leigh Ann Vradenburg is executive director of the Friends of the Bosque, NM.

Honors



Anngeloace Blue-McLean, of the Friends of Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge Complex in Florida, received a Regional Conservation

Award from former Southeast Regional Director Sam Hamilton, (now confirmed Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service). Blue-McLean led the effort to establish a Friends group for Tampa Bay National Wildlife Refuge Complex and also helped secure a grant to provide land access to Crystal River Refuge. Blue-McLean was also instrumental in helping the Refuge System acquire the 57-acre Three Sisters Springs property, which will ultimately become part of Crystal River Refuge.



Rona Balco, Friends of Oxbow National Wildlife Refuge, MA, carved this Blanding's turtle.

Rona Balco, founder of the Friends of Oxbow National Wildlife Refuge in Massachusetts, was honored by the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women as one of 100 Unsung Heroines of 2009. When Fort Devens closed in 1996, Balco joined the effort that would ultimately establish the Oxbow Refuge and has continued to lobby for its care and expansion. *W*

Attracting New Visitors with Classic Species

by Eddy Pausch

Did you hear that a roadrunner and a cougar were spotted this year at Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge in Ohio?

Rare but not unheard of in the area, the classic cars drew a new audience to the 9,000-acre refuge when the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge Association hosted the first annual Cars for Critters Benefit in 2008. The event raised \$1,400 for the Friends from car registration fees, t-shirt and refreshment sales, and donations. The second annual event is planned for September.

With many of the classic cars named after critters, it seemed like an obvious theme for a refuge event. More than 300 people came to see 75 cars. Flyers were distributed at car shows to spread the word. Owners brought their cars and paid a registration fee (\$10 early, \$12 day of show).

Among the cars were a '62 Chevy Impala, a '94 Dodge Viper and a '64 Chevy Malibu that traveled 160 miles to be in the show. The audience voted for Best Insect—a really red 1978 VW Beetle, Best Mammal—a beautiful ivy green '69 Mercury Cougar XR-7 convertible, and Best Fish—an outrageously orange '72 Oldsmobile Cutlass. *W*

Eddy Pausch is assistant manager at Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge in Ohio.



DOUG BREWER

Puddles checked out the migrating power of a 1969 Chevrolet Chevelle SS396 at the Cars for Critters Show at Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge in Ohio.

The Big Sit



The 2009 Big Sit is scheduled right as National Wildlife Refuge Week begins—Sunday, October 11. The Big Sit is an

annual, international, noncompetitive birding event hosted by *Bird Watcher's Digest* and founded by the New Haven (CT) Bird Club. It is sponsored by Swarovski Optik, Alpen Optics and Wild Bird Centers.

Friends organizations and refuge staff often work together to coordinate a Big Sit event. The first step is to find a good spot for bird watching. The rules are simple: mark off a circle 17 feet in diameter and sit inside the circle

for 24 hours, counting all the bird species participants see or hear. Not everyone needs to stay in the circle for the entire 24 hours but only birds seen while participants are within the circle can be included in the count. *Bird Watcher's Digest* tallies the totals and identifies prizewinners in several categories.

The Big Sit can be held in conjunction with other Refuge Week activities. It provides an opportunity to promote interest in birding as well as volunteering at the refuge or joining the Friends organization.

Thirty-six national wildlife refuges joined The Big Sit in 2008. There is more information at <www.birdwatchersdigest.com> (Search Big Sit) or contact <Michael_Carlo@fws.gov>. *W*

Climate, continued from page 1

Each region and each refuge faces different climate change challenges. Friends organizations will take their cue from refuge managers and changes that may need to be made in Comprehensive Conservation Plans (CCP). Climate change impacts must now be explicitly assessed and addressed in all planning efforts.

A Few Key Terms

Strategic Habitat Conservation (SHC) — Effective conservation requires thoughtful consideration of how climate change will affect species and habitat not just on a single refuge but across an entire landscape. Are we conserving the right places based on the changes that lie ahead?

Sea Level Affecting Marshes Model (SLAMM) — The Refuge System uses computerized models to understand how sea level rise will affect coastal marshes, tidal flats, beaches and swamps. The model applied to Bayou Tech National Wildlife Refuge in Louisiana, for example, assumes that sea levels will rise one meter by 2100, an assumption based on scientific literature. This means that by 2100, the refuge will be mostly open water; dry land and small areas of cypress. The loss of cypress will reduce the populations of species dependent on this type of forest and conservation efforts must take this into account.

SLAMM measures six key variables: how the sea will flood a refuge, how the land will erode, how waves will overtake ground, the ability of certain lands to absorb water, how wetlands can rebuild themselves and how salt and fresh water will mix. “SLAMM will be used by many coastal refuge managers to involve the public in

discussions concerning sea level rise as part of the CCP process,” says Lou Hinds, manager of Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge in Virginia.

Carbon sequestration — Healthy growing forests are highly effective at sequestering carbon dioxide. Terrestrial carbon sequestration is expected to be an effective and reasonably priced means of removing CO₂ from the atmosphere for at least the next 50 years. Numerous refuges and Friends organizations have been involved in tree planting programs to mitigate the accumulation of greenhouse gases.

The Service is poised to play a significant role in addressing the effects of climate change on fish, wildlife and plants by working collaboratively with multiple partners—including Friends—to develop adaptation, mitigation and public engagement strategies to address climate change.


There are numerous tools available to help Friends educate themselves and reach out to engage the public as “climate stewards:”

- Climate Change basics, Going Green, Video, Sea Level Affecting Marshes Model (SLAMM) <www.slamview.org>
- Climate Change, Wildlife and Wildlands Toolkit for Educators <www.globalchange.gov/resources/educators/toolkit>
- Climate Change resources, including videos, links, news updates <www.fws.gov/home/climatechange>
- Webinars on climate change and wildlife-related topics by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Wildlife Federation <training.fws.gov/CSP/Resources/climate_change_webinars/archives.html> 

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- Inspect your duct system for obvious signs of leaks and disconnections. Most houses leak 20 percent or more. Seal leaks with foil tape or a special sealant called “duct mastic.”
- Consider programmable thermostats. Adjusting household temperatures down two degrees in winter and up two degrees in summer can save about 2,000 pounds of carbon dioxide.
- Run ceiling fans in a clockwise direction to create a wind-chill effect that will make you “feel” cooler. Ceiling fans cool people, not rooms—so turn them off when you leave.
- From warm showers to clean dishes, we count on hot water. The average household spends \$400–\$600 each year on water heating—making it the second largest energy expenditure behind heating/cooling. Most Americans have conventional water heaters that are barely more efficient than ones sold 20 years ago. Consider replacing your aging water heater with a high efficiency model that can improve performance as it cuts energy usage.

Each of us can make a difference. When I was refuge manager at Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge, our custodial worker, Dan Thorington, initiated a program to reduce, reuse and recycle waste produced in normal refuge operations. Through Dan’s leadership, the refuge has reduced by 80 percent the amount being added to the local landfill. Our purchasing turned to green cleaning products. Imagine if each of us could follow Dan’s lead—even in our own homes.

Together, we can make the changes that will not only affect natural resources in our time, but for future generations. 

Q&A *send us your questions*

Q: What are some good outreach strategies in response to the current economic climate?

A: Friends organizations may be in a better position to weather the economic downturn than larger nonprofit groups because they have local appeal rather than the remoteness of national organizations. Moreover, they work for national wildlife refuges, which can attract visitors because they are low-cost travel destinations.

Friends groups already are offering some incentives for new members. The Friends of the Lower Suwannee and Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuges (FL) includes lunch at its annual meeting to attract new members. Friends member Jay Bushnell says the group networks with other organizations like garden clubs that share a similar interest in conservation.

Peggy Tillier, the new membership chair for Friends of Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge (MD), responded to a drop in members by adding new benefits. Two local restaurants and a new retreat complex offer a 10 percent discount to Friends members. The closest outdoor recreation business also offers a 10 percent discount on rentals of canoes, kayaks and

bicycles. A local bed and breakfast saw a newsletter article about the new benefits and offered to add its own discount. Each merchant stocks a supply of Friends membership applications; Tillier says seven new members joined the first month these new incentives were offered. She includes the list of discounts when she sends out membership renewal emails.

Many Friends organizations offer a range of membership options, with lower rates for students, families or seniors. Friends of Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge (ID) has started to offer a wider range of payment options: \$10 for seniors/students; \$25 for families; \$50 for an Osprey membership; \$500 or more for an Eagle; and \$1,000 or more for a Goldeneye membership. *W*

Calendar

September 4

Fall deadline — National Fish and Wildlife Fund Grants. Visit Grant Programs at <www.nfwf.org>.

September 12–13

Sales Outlets: Beyond Bookstores — This course will be held at the Lied Lodge and Conference Center in Nebraska City, NE. It is designed for Friends members, who will receive hands-on training in marketing, displaying and selecting merchandise. Scholarship funding is available. Contact <Trevor_Needham@fws.gov> at 703-358-2392.

Saturday, September 26

National Hunting and Fishing Day — This day, established by Congress and President Richard Nixon in 1971, recognizes the contribution of hunters and anglers to wildlife conservation.

Saturday, September 26

National Public Lands Day — This day is dedicated to teaching Americans about the need to work together to protect and improve forests and other public lands. Volunteers may help build trails and bridges, remove trash and invasive plants or plant trees. More information at <www.publiclandsday.org>

October 11–17

National Wildlife Refuge Week — Work with your Refuge Manager to use the Refuge Week Toolkit, including tips on birding programs and a localized press release/letter to the editor. Each refuge will also be receiving a birding banner.

FriendsForward

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